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ABSTRACT

Women's participation in sport is emphasized in this historical, philosophical, and sociological sketch of sport and physical recreation activities. Various sports are traced from the time of George Washington up through the present noting cultural influences that affected their development. Under the heading "Past Events," American Indian women, basketball, schools and agencies, and the Olympic Games are highlighted. Other topics include sports organizations, the current mood, current developments, problems, and prognostications. (MM)

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WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN AMERICAN SPORT

INTRODUCTION

Leona HOLBROOK

SPORT

Sport has an appeal for the able person who is conditioned by experience and culture to participate. Sport calls upon total power, concentration, and commitment. It demands plan and calls for selected appropriate action and concerted or continuous effort. The able well-rounded man will participate in sport when the emphasis is upon the pleasure principle in the participation. The able girl or woman will find that expression and participation in sport are pleasurable and fully rewarding when the cultural acceptance or emphasis gives support to participation.

Sport for men or women is conditioned partly by the times, the mode of life, and the general conduct and moral quality of a people. But sport is not always just influenced. Sport itself can be the influence. Sport with its leaders and its participants can, in part, mold the society. Sport can make a vital social, moral, ethical, and physical contribution to the present condition of man and to his continuing and ultimate condition. Sport as planned action can and must be not only the result of society's change but must be an agent for planned change in individuals and in society.

The amateur in sport is free to play the kind of game he chooses and to conduct himself according to his own moral, personal and ethical standards. The game itself, the sport itself, is the reason for participating and is in essence the participant's way of being. The amateur is fully free to be a true sportsman while he is an accomplishing expressing self.

Sport is chosen overt expression and action in endeavors which provide challenge through the environment, in the elements and in nature, or which present competition or conditions for rivalry between contenders or opponents.

Sport is modern life, sport is present culture and sport must be part of education and physical education.

Sport is a natural expression but it is also a design for human living and the human condition. The best designs for sport action lead to an enhancement of the performer through quality participation that is fully human. Fine participation gives sport a good name.

THIS REPORT

This report might be identified as historical, but it is at the same time philosophical and sociological. Some sports and recreations associated with patterns from European beginnings, and new sports associated with work endeavors did exist and were practiced in early America.

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After George Washington's time sports did develop for men, and as the interest grew some inclusions were made for women in the more gentle of sports or the social sports. In the latter half of the 1800's sports grew in popularity and interest for both men and women as spectators and as participants. The activities for men were more varied, more vigorous and more competitive than they were for women. Specific sports clubs and athletic clubs came into existence and flourished. In some of the events and at some of the clubs and resorts women were spectators or occasionally participants, but in many of the clubs women were not allowed.

The mood for women's activities was sometimes the determining factor of what was good. Quite generally there were limitations in activity of a sports nature for women up to and through most of the 18th century. Dio Lewis got his morals and his mechanics mixed up when he wrote in 1874 in the book Our Girls, "The round dances were not admitted for the following reasons: 1st, the rotary motion is injurious to the brain and spinal marrow, 2nd, the peculiar contact between the man and the woman may suggest impure thoughts." (1) Lewis opted for the square dance because it does away with the "tendency toward individual display" (2) and does not provide the "excuse, for what, without it, would be gross indelicacy." (3) Dio saved us and himself in his further statement,

> But if a young woman, of fair mental capacity, breaks through the channels of propriety, rides the saddle astride, climbs fences and trees, joins a baseball club, or acquires distinction in any roystering game which demands pluck and endurance you may expect something. She possesses the elements of a strong womanhood. I would prefer one such woman...to a dozen women who are deeply distinguished in girlhood for immaculate collars and bows. (4)

Dio Lewis recommended with quaint expressions, the activities of croquet, skating, dancing, walking, battle door and baseball clubs. In skating and walking he cautioned that there were limitations on upper body development, and on "baseball clubs" he commented that they "have been organized among young women with the happiest results to their health, spirits, activity and grace. They look very pretty in their gymnastic costume, and really they play wonderfully well." (5) Lewis also gave full support to horseback riding for girls. (6)

Football came into being as the sport for college men just over one hundred years ago. Football was a spectator sport for women. Croquet, roller skating, and lawn tennis in the recreational pursuits

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(1) Lewis, Dio. Our Girls, New York: Harper Brothers, 1874, p. 226.
(2) Ibid, p. 227.
(3) Ibid, p. 228.
(4) Ibid, p. 338.
(5) Ibid, p. 226.
(6) Lewis, Dio. Five Minute Chats With Young Women, New York: Harper Brothers, 1874. p. 70.

of America included women. Bicycling in the 1870's included women as passengers. "Ladies toured in a more leisurely fashion, traveling on tandem tricycles." (1)

Fine estate homes, country clubs and athletic clubs had facilities which provided for some sports such as golf and tennis. In 1890 there was a national championship in tennis for women.

The Tribune Book of Open-Air Sports (1887) (2) includes women in riding, archery, fishing, swimming and bicycling. A bicycle advertisement in the book illustrates women on a tricycle, seated low between two large wheels with a bar to control the small front wheel. Power is gained by alternately pushing two parallel pedals which are directly under the feet.

Women's crew came into existence at Cornell and in 1896 the ladies celebrated with a group photograph when they acquired a boathouse of their own. (3) In another photograph which is unidentified as to time or place there is a strange boat on four bicycle wheels which are attached by sprocket, gear and chain to four paddles, propelled by four women. The whole arrangement directed by a male coxswain is for the crew to practice in a "dry-shell" for the Henley Regatta. (4) Our American women learned from the British and others and were in tune with their times.

Women as sports participants have been pictured in the old books on style such as Godey's Lady Books, in historic photographs, and in paintings in collections and galleries. Most of the women players and participants in sports of the late 1800's appeared in long skirts, blouses with long sleeves and high collars, and wide brimmed, fancily trimmed hats.

The invention of basketball in 1891 gave a new emphasis to sports for both men and women, and the momentum for sports participation which was gained through basketball has continued from that time forward. Though originally a game intended for men, basketball may have changed the scene for women both in general and in specific ways and more markedly than it did for men.

The automobile in the early 1900's gave freedom of mobility and with that mobility a freedom of thought for both men and women. The new clothing styles for motoring greatly facilitated freedom in motion and action, particularly for women. The motor car gave freedom and helped set the pace for women's sports.

Those conditions or events which have given quality, distinction and credibility to sport for men and boys have served, at the same time, to give a good name to similar sport activities for women and girls.

In the early 1900's the mood was that girls in high schools and women in colleges and universities located conveniently enough might

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(1) Time-Life. This Fabulous Century, Vol., 1870-1890, New York, 1970, p. 114.

(2) Hall, Henry, Editor. The Tribune Book of Open-Air Sports, New York, 1887.

(3) Time-Life. This Fabulous Century, Vol., 1890-1900, New York, 1970, pp. 160, 161.

(4) Horizon "If Customary Modes of Travel Pall" Summer 1971, Vo. XIII, No. 3, p. 109.

responsibly, recreationally and rewardingly participate in sports on an intramural basis, extramural basis or sometimes on a so-called interschool basis. Some problems existed or came into being when the players went into the wider realms of competition. Problems over travel, rowdy crowds, rude spectators and other detractions occurred. Sport itself or competition was considered to be the cause of all the problems. If the competition were diminished, the problems would be diminished or would be solved. So, early in the 20's the emphasis was given to play at home and stay-at-home events. If and when the girl and women players were to go beyond the walls, they were to participate in play days or sports days.

Physical educators kept a control on competition in most states, and most teacher education institutions in all states educated their prospective professionals for the idea that intercollegiate competition or high level competition was undesirable for high school girls and college women. The mood prevailed for the greater part of half a century, from 1920 until 1970.

PAST EVENTS

AMERICAN INDIAN WOMEN

For historic events one must begin with the American Indian women who had dances, games, and sports and who, at times, participated in group games, sports and dance with the tribe. "Married women joined actively in the athletics of the tribe...There are games intended for the young boys, for the men, for the girls and women." (1)

BASKETBALL

American women participated in interclass and interschool competition in the late 1800's. The new game of basketball served for women's play and moved from the east coast colleges to the schools of the west coast. Old accounts tell of the games and have pictures of the teams. (2) The mid-west was the area of greatest activity and has so continued.

SCHOOLS AND AGENCIES

In 1905 the Public School Athletic League of New York City developed a branch of the organization to offer some sports and activity to girls through basketball, relay teams and Indian clubs. Folk dancing, led by Elizabeth Burchenal, was one of the emphasized aspects of the program.

YWCA's, clubs, and schools were centers for activity and scheduled programs for women.

The Playground and Recreation Association of America with the Athletic Badge test for Boys and Girls in 1927 gave recognition to sports associated skills.

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(1) Stow, Edith. Boys' Games Among the North American Indians, New York: E.D. Dutton Col. 1924, pp. 2, 20.

(2) Time-Life. This Fabulous Century, Vol. 1900-1910, pp. 154, 144.

OLYMPIC GAMES

Women were not officially entered in the Olympic Games until 1928, and there was discussion and debate before the decision was reached to continue the participation of women in the Olympic games of 1932 which were to be held in Los Angeles. Of that event, Florence A. Somers wrote in 1930,

> With a true spirit of patriotism and hospitality certain American organizations have started plans already to train a team of women for the 1932 games which shall be a credit to America and which shall beat all comers. In order not to be far behind in preparation, other organizations have adopted resolutions disapproving the participation of women in such forms of international competition with the hope that they may make educators and parents realize the much greater benefit of a home program of sports for all girls. Among the latter organizations are the Women's Division, National Amateur Athletic Federation Section on Women's Athletics, American Physical Education Association, and the Association of Directors of Physical Education for Women in Colleges and Universities. (1)

The United States Olympic Committee gives full opportunity to women for their training, selection and travel to the Pan American games and to the Olympics.

ORGANIZATIONS

National professional organizations, sports organizations, and committees and structures within associations have given the time, the finance and the leadership to encourage what each has believed in its own time to be the high ideal of sport for women.

CURRENT MOOD

There is a good attitude in the world and in the United States toward activity and toward sports for women.

The sports activities of mankind are overlooked in some cases, but in most instances extensive and creditable presentation sets an excellent mood for sport to function as an expression for a full and expressive human being.

Newspapers and magazines feature stories which give credit to and recognize the distinctive qualities of sport for both men and women. When men in sport conduct themselves well as participants and as men, sport for women is well served. The public begins to become astute enough to recognize what is real sport and amateur sport, and to differentiate the authentic sport endeavors from "put-ons" and bad-

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(1) Somers, Florence A., Principles of Women's Athletics, New York: A.S. Barnes Company, 1930.

mannered exhibitionism. Real sport and amateur sport must continue to be enhanced by the participants, the coaches, and the administrators.

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

Many events show progress for sports in the lives of Americans. The favorable conditions for sport for both men and women make for its development and enhancement. Women often figure in the whole equation and sometimes have special attention.

There are many organizations and events to accomplish the work at hand. The development of sport in general, the facilities, transportation, favorable publicity, social acceptance and clothing styles will encourage and help to carry on sport action. The quality of those who provide services, those who use services, and those who direct sports will ultimately determine the nature and the quality of sport itself.

The stand is taken for women's sports. The possibility of problems is foreseen--sports for women will not be abandoned again in fear of the inherent problems.

PROBLEMS

In the past years there has been intelligent and continuous study of sport for women, its physiological factors, its sociological implications, its educational importance, and its financial and administrative obligations. Professional persons, committees and organizations have met problems, designed for progress and directed capably.

Some of the problems which dominate the thinking of leaders today are the ones which have come up in the past. A few of these problems are common to athletic administration or sports direction in general, for both men and women. Some are unique in these times, or are unique to women.

In conferences and committee meetings they will be met and they will be solved, some of them slowly and some never completely to the satisfaction of all or the ones who have every right by calling and commitment to be the most concerned. The problems will be approached and worked on and solved by those women who are professionally educated, who believe, and who are committed. The design for our problem solving and our attainments must persist in our minds.

PROGNOSTICATIONS

Sport for women will be considered in the structure and the restructure of our social and educational planning. There will be decision and there will be knowledge which will allow leaders to create deliberately and fully. Sport will be integrated with the plan and design of a structural unity in social and educational responsibility. Sport will have a service in relation to total human objectives. The plan and the action of input will be related to the

expected output both quantitatively and qualitatively. Sport will be unique to its own purposes but it will be contributive to life purposes.

Sport will continue to contribute to life in America. Sport for girls and women is an activity which is suited to their ways. Sport is expression, sport is joy, sport is appreciation, sport is socialization, sport is concern for teammate and opponent. Sport is beauty of action for the able and the willing. Sport is a way of life for girls and women. The selected and directed action of girls and women will enhance the way of life for girls and women. Their sport will be increasingly creditable. We have the knowledge; we can plan and pursue the patterns toward our objectives. The programs for schools and the activities for individuals will continue to expand the emphasis and enlarge the opportunities for expressive educational endeavors. We have our women's ways. We have the desire and the dedication.

The future is certain. We will make some certain designs for participation in women's sport in America.